

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The [Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative](#) (ESIC) aims to strengthen the global evidence ecosystem by making evidence synthesis more accessible, timely, relevant, and trusted for decision-makers and end-users.

This Stage 4b report, developed by Working Group 1 on Demand-Side Engagement, should be read in conjunction with the Stage 4a report – available [here](#).

Stage 4a set out five options for enhancing engagement with evidence users across sectors and regions. The approach responds to persistent disparities between sectors, recognising that while areas like health and development have formalised systems and evidence intermediaries, others such as the environment, education, and humanitarian response require foundational investments to engage effectively with synthesis processes.

Stage 4b sets out estimated costs of the proposed options. This will support the development finalize investment strategies for scaling demand-side engagement globally.

### Structure of this report

This report includes two parts. **Part One** – focuses on costings the five demand-side engagement options: Each option is split into two costing variants:

- **Option A:** is a high costing version outlining what the working group believes would be a well resourced and effective solution
- **Option B:** is a scaled down version that compromises on reach and timing of the option.

A summary is included in the table below (all figures are in USD):

	Option A (USD)	Option B (USD)
1. Regional demand-side secretariats	\$23.0m	\$11.0m
2. Support to Evidence Intermediaries	\$16.0m	\$11.6m
3. Co-design Labs	\$12.0m	\$5.3m
4. Question/thematic repository	\$4.7m	\$3.7m
5. Grants to End Users	\$15.7m	\$9.4m

A description is presented followed by a costing breakdown and total figure for the option.

**Part Two** – looks at practical elements of implementation and timing.

**Appendices** provide a glossary and comparative overview of options (from Report 4a) and a summary of how Options connect with the work from Stages 1 and 2.

# PART ONE – COSTING OF OPTIONS FOR WG1

## Option 1A - Regional demand-side secretariats: \$17.7m

Establish regional demand-side secretariats – decentralised coordination bodies focused on actively engaging evidence intermediaries and evidence users who can directly influence, are affected by, or inform/support policy and other decision-making processes. This ensures that evidence users' needs, concerns, contexts, and perspectives shape evidence syntheses for greater relevance and impact in applied settings.

This option proposes establishing regional secretariats to coordinate and support demand-side engagement in evidence synthesis. These secretariats will serve as decentralised governance hubs and will also actively carry out work across various sectors and contexts. Their aim is to strengthen regional capabilities while promoting global alignment and shared learning

<b>Implementation Caveats</b>	Before establishing the secretariats, feasibility studies should be conducted to gather evidence on the availability of existing organisations that can house and operate the regional secretariats, ensuring they have the necessary capacity and reach. Additionally, we need to assess whether to develop from country nodes and how to effectively group and support the sectors that require assistance
<b>Staff Profile</b>	1 x Director and Advocacy lead (Tier 1) 3 x Sector Specialists (Tier 1) 3 x Sector Leads (Tier 2) 1 x Communications & Partnerships Lead (Tier 2) 1 x Administrative Support (Tier 3) 0.3 x Grants Administration Support (to be costed in option 5)
<b>Sequencing</b>	Year 1: set up 3 secretariats (Africa, Asia and LAC) Year 1: Set up 2 Secretariats (Eastern Europe and Western Europe & Other States)
<b>Operational needs</b>	An annual provision of \$100,000 in contracted or commissioned work to support expert input, facilitation, and infrastructure development

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$14,892,775	77.61%
Contracts	\$2,300,000	11.99%
Tools	\$108,858	0.57%
Training event attendance	\$1,116,000	5.82%
Citizen engagement	\$223,200	1.16%
Travel	\$419,750	2.19%
Dissemination	\$127,650	0.67%
Other	\$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	\$19,188,233	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$23,025,880	

## Option 1B - Regional demand-side secretariats: \$8.7m

As per 1A but scope of work is reduced; core staff compliment is reduced; sequencing changed – changes in purple

<b>Implementation Caveats</b>	As per 1A
<b>Staff Profile</b>	<p>1 x Director (Tier 1)</p> <p>2 x Sector Leads (Evidence Leads for 3 areas: for example - economics; social services/health; environment) (Tier 2)</p> <p>1 x Admin support and Communications &amp; Partnerships Lead (Tier 2)</p> <p>Reduced 3 x sector specialists; 1 x sector lead; 1 x comms and partnerships (merged with admin)</p>
<b>Sequencing</b>	<p>Year 1: set up 2 Secretariats (Africa and LAC); 50% initial year funding; transition to full operational budgets in subsequent years</p> <p>Year 1: set up 2 Secretariats (Eastern Europe and Asia); 50% initial year funding; transition to full operational budgets in subsequent years</p> <p>Year 3: set up 1 Secretariat (Western Europe &amp; Other States); 50% initial year funding; transition to full operational budgets in subsequent years</p>
<b>Operational needs</b>	An annual provision of \$100,000 in contracted or commissioned work to support expert input, facilitation, and infrastructure development.

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$5,807,852	63.62%
Contracts	\$1,850,000	20.27%
Tools	\$60,856	0.67%
Training event attendance	\$780,000	8.54%
Citizen engagement	\$186,000	2.04%
Travel	\$327,000	3.58%
Dissemination	\$116,550	1.28%
Other	\$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	\$9,128,258	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$10,953,910	

## Option 2A: Support to Evidence Intermediaries: \$15.0m

(There can be overlap/integration with WG5, Options 1, 3 & 4; these options must be considered by investors)

This option aims to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of evidence intermediaries—organisations and individuals that connect evidence producers with decision-makers. Capacity strengthening will be achieved through targeted technical assistance and institutional partnerships, which will support intermediaries in developing, adapting, and assuming a more impactful role in bridging the evidence-to-policy gap within their respective contexts.

<b>Implementation Caveats</b>	Support could be embedded within existing institutions or hosted through regional secretariat; delivery model assumes technical (expert) staff are drawn from partner organisations, reducing need for permanent staffing. Implementation will be regionally distributed, with one coordination node per global region (5 total). These nodes will leverage established organisations and networks to mentor and support new or emerging intermediaries. Subsidised engagement will be offered to ensure inclusivity and access, especially in low-resource settings or nascent sectors. The secretariat would ensure cross sectoral balance and not become too aligned with dominant sectors.
<b>Staff Profile</b>	1 x Coordinator (Tier 2) 1 x Tech assistance/ support (Tier 2) 0.5 x Administrative Support (Tier 1)
<b>Sequencing</b>	All regional intermediary support activities are planned to commence in Year 1, enabling early-stage capacity development and system readiness.
<b>Operational needs</b>	Annual provision of \$400,000 to fund a suite of options that will include mentorship program and training workshops (\$50,000: split 70:30 between teacher and learner organisations); regional secondments (\$75,000); fellowships (\$50,000); and major hosted events (learning or strategy) plus learning outputs (\$15,000);

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$2,669,019	19.99%
Contracts	\$10,000,000	74.89%
Tools	\$52,050	0.39%
Training event attendance	\$0	0.00%
Citizen engagement	\$0	0.00%
Travel	\$456,250	3.42%
Dissemination	\$176,250	1.32%
Other	\$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	\$13,353,569	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$16,024,283	

## Option 2B: Support to Evidence Intermediaries: \$11.4m

As per 2A - core staff compliment is reduced; sequencing changed - changes in purple

<b>Implementation Caveats</b>	As per 2A
<b>Staff Profile</b>	0.5 x Coordinator (Tier 2) 0.5 x Administrative Support (Tier 1)
<b>Sequencing</b>	Year 1 – Establish 2 regions Year 2 – 2 more regions Year 3 – 1 more region
<b>Operational needs</b>	Annual provision of \$400,000 to fund: mentorship program (\$50,000: split 70:30 between teacher and learner organisations); regional secondments (\$75,000); fellowships (\$50,000); and major hosted events - learning or strategy plus learning outputs (\$15,000).

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$719,777	7.43%
Contracts	\$8,400,000	86.75%
Tools	\$32,348	0.33%
Training event attendance	\$0	0.00%
Citizen engagement	\$0	0.00%
Travel	\$383,250	3.96%
Dissemination	\$148,050	1.53%
Other	\$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	\$9,683,425	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$11,620,110	

## Option 3A: Demand-side Co-design Labs: \$10.7m

(Will have links to options that generate tools for evidence synthesis – as a user of these tools)

Demand-side Co-design Labs: would support co-production of knowledge, from identifying and prioritising questions to synthesising and using contextually relevant evidence.

This option establishes regional Co-Design Labs as collaborative spaces where policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and community actors jointly define, explore, and respond to priority issues through evidence synthesis. Labs create structured opportunities for cross-sectoral dialogue, co-creation, and practical problem-solving. The labs will:

- Provide hosted facilitation and technical support over 10-week cycles, structured around 6 key engagement points
- Run 4 intakes per year, each supporting 3 co-design groups per intake (12 total)
- Identify and support diverse participants, ensuring equity and inclusion in lab engagement.
- Offer small participation grants to enable access for under-resourced organisations.
- Encourage co-contribution from participating organisations to embed shared ownership and applied relevance.

### Implementation Caveats

The Labs would be established on a regional basis and would connect to and leverage off both existing local skills (in intermediaries and demand-side evidence units); and newly created functions linked to other options (question repositories and regional secretariats). The labs would operate as independent hubs with consistent programming and approach. Each lab will work across policy domains and sectors, tailoring content to regional and thematic priorities. Labs would establish selection criteria for co-design issues/participants and follow-up on learnings from participants.

### Staff Profile

1 x Lab Director (Tier 1)  
2 x Key Workers/Facilitators (Tier 2)  
0.5 x Communications Officer (Tier 2)  
1 x Admin (Tier 1)

### Sequencing

Two labs to be launched in Year 1, with the remaining three to be established in Year 2, allowing for initial learning and refinement before full expansion

### Operational needs

\$150,000 annually to provide \$30,000 grants to small orgs for participation and access; \$2,000 annually per lab for collab software tools and subscriptions

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$6,379,735	59.25%
Contracts	\$3,006,000	27.92%
Tools	\$86,360	0.80%
Training event attendance	\$126,000	1.17%
Citizen engagement	\$294,000	2.73%
Travel	\$500,850	4.65%
Dissemination	\$375,000	3.48%
Other	\$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	\$10,767,945	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$12,921,534	

## Option 3B: Demand-side Co-design Labs: \$4.50m

As pre 3A with changes to level of work and number of labs – changes in purple

<b>Implementation Caveats</b>	<p>The labs will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide hosted facilitation and technical support over 10-week cycles, structured around 6 key engagement points</li> <li>• <b>Run 3 intakes per year</b>, each supporting 3 co-design groups per intake (<b>9 total</b>)</li> <li>• Identify and support diverse participants, ensuring equity and inclusion in lab engagement.</li> <li>• Offer small participation grants to enable access for under-resourced organisations.</li> <li>• Encourage co-contribution from participating organisations to embed shared ownership and applied relevance.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Profile</b>	As per 3A for each lab
<b>Sequencing</b>	<b>Two labs only in Option B – one ‘north’ and one ‘south’ (Option 3A expanded to 5 labs)</b>
<b>Operational needs</b>	<b>\$90,000</b> annually to provide \$30,000 grants to small organisations for participation and access; \$2,000 annually per lab for collaborative software tools and subscriptions

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$3,109,568	69.96%
Contracts	\$814,500	18.32%
Tools	\$44,300	1.00%
Training event attendance	\$70,000	1.57%
Citizen engagement	\$85,500	1.92%
Travel	\$171,000	3.85%
Dissemination	\$150,000	3.37%
Other	\$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	\$4,444,868	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$5,333,842	

## Option 4A: A global digital repository to capture priority policy questions and related information: \$3.6m

A global digital repository to capture priority policy questions and related information from end-users. The repository will identify unifying themes across jurisdictions, focusing on 'big questions' faced by multiple actors worldwide. It will align with evidence synthesis efforts to reduce duplication and unify actions addressing these global challenges.

Functions include: Facilitate the submission, curation, and refinement of policy-relevant questions from diverse stakeholders; Enable prioritisation through transparent, criteria-based processes, potentially enhanced with AI tools; Link repository questions to synthesis outputs and ongoing evidence initiatives. Promote visibility of cross-sector and cross-regional evidence needs; Support co-development processes with demand-side actors to ensure relevance and legitimacy; Offer limited evidence mapping services; Begin identifying more local and unique challenges where regional efforts are preferred to global reviews; scanning of review-based govt tenders and opportunities

### Implementation Caveats

Implementation would create a global repository segmented by regions and key characteristics of identified challenges, linked to regional resources and repositories. These repositories would cover multiple sectors and offer both open access and structured interfaces for synthesis commissioning. Particular attention would need to be paid to sectors with weak synthesis cultures (e.g., environment), where significant time and iterative engagement may be needed to refine policy/practice questions into synthesis-ready formats. And difficulties may merge with question standardisation particularly across sectors with different norms. This work would align and integrate with other demand-side engagement activities (inform focus of co-design labs) and integrate with set-ups of other repositories (potential to share technical skills and platform development costs WG4)

### Staff Profile

<b>LEAD MODEL (yr 1-3):</b> 1 x Director (Tier 1)	<b>REGIONAL MODEL (yr 4/5):</b> 1 x Directors
2 x Regional leads (1 GS / 1 GN) (Tier 2)	(Tier 1)
2 x Technicians with specialist IT skills (Tier 2)	5 x Regional leads (1 per region) (Tier 2)
1 x Facilitation lead (Tier 2)	0.5 x Technicians (Tier 2)
1 x Admin and Comms Officer (Tier 2)	2 x Facilitation leads (Tier 2)
	1 x Admin and Comms Officer (Tier 2)

**Advisory body** – to learn from existing global-level knowledge co-ordination efforts. 10 people @ \$10,000/yr ea.

### Sequencing

Functional stand up and establishment over first three years – 6 months build; 18 months refinement; 12 months full operation; then ongoing delivery and expansion to 5 regional leads and ongoing engagement. Start globally by design to connect global challenges ('big questions'); then transition to regional set-up covering x 5 regions (one region with leads in each region)

### Operational needs

An annual provision of \$200,000 to support extensive external outreach and engagement



Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$2,469,319	63.05%
Contracts	\$420,000	10.72%
Tools	\$29,894	0.76%
Training event attendance	\$20,000	0.51%
Citizen engagement	\$180,000	4.60%
Travel	\$212,500	5.43%
Dissemination	\$85,000	2.17%
Other	\$500,000	12.77%
Total direct costs	\$3,916,713	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$4,700,056	

## Option 4B: A global digital repository to capture priority policy questions and related information: \$2.8m

As per 4A with a reduction in the number of regional leads and level of scale-up – changes in purple

<b>Implementation Caveats</b>	As per 4A	
<b>Staff Profile</b>	<b>LEAD MODEL (yr 1-3):</b> 1 x Director (Tier 1) 2 x Regional leads (1 GS / 1 GN) (Tier 2) 2 x Technicians with specialist IT skills (Tier 2) 1 x Facilitation lead (Tier 2) 1 x Admin and Comms Officer (Tier 2)	<b>OPERATION (yr 4/5):</b> 1 x Directors (Tier 1) 2 x Regional leads (1 per region) (Tier 2) 0.5 x Technicians (Tier 2) 1 x Facilitation leads (Tier 2) 1 x Admin and Comms Officer (Tier 2)
	<b>Advisory body</b> – to learn from existing global-level knowledge co-ordination efforts. 10 people @ \$10,000/yr ea.	
<b>Sequencing</b>	Functional stand up and establishment over first three years – 6 months build; 18 months refinement; 12 months full operation; then ongoing delivery at same scale as start-up.	
<b>Operational needs</b>	An annual provision of \$100,000 to support extensive external outreach and engagement	

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$2,007,326	65.23%
Contracts	\$210,000	6.82%
Tools	\$28,022	0.91%
Training event attendance	\$16,000	0.52%
Citizen engagement	\$90,000	2.92%
Travel	\$153,000	4.97%
Dissemination	\$73,000	2.37%
Other*	\$500,000	16.25%
Total direct costs	\$3,077,348	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$3,692,817	

\* Cost likely to amended downwards in final version (adjustment wasn't possible before publication)

## Option 5A Grants to End Users: \$15.5m

This investment model aims to enhance the use of evidence synthesis by directly funding decision makers and front-line actors who do not have the resources to commission evidence synthesis. It prioritises underserved regions and sectors where intermediary infrastructure is limited, empowering local actors to embed evidence in policy and practice through context-driven innovation. This model would include mechanisms for grant accountability and learning capture.

<b>Implementation Caveats</b>	The grants scheme can achieve optimal impact when its implementation is aligned with the work of the regional secretariats (Option 1) and the technical support aimed at capacity strengthening that would be provided to evidence intermediaries (Option 2). Success of grants in sectors like the environment will depend on upstream investments in regional coordination (Option 1) and support to intermediaries (Option 2), which enable both the targeting and uptake of synthesis.
<b>Staff Profile</b>	0.3 FTE Grants Coordinator per region, embedded within the regional secretariat structure (Tier 2). Projects will target diverse sectors with limited existing synthesis infrastructure.
<b>Sequencing</b>	The Grants Programme/Scheme is scheduled to commence in Year 1, with 50% of the full-year grants available. Early implementation will facilitate rapid learning and provide context-specific insights.
<b>Operational needs</b>	Annual grant budget of approximately \$2.5m (\$500,000 per region) 8 grants per global region per year (40 total annually) that can range from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$578,043	4.41%
Contracts	\$12,500,000	95.45%
Tools	\$17,350	0.13%
Training event attendance	\$0	0.00%
Citizen engagement	\$0	0.00%
Travel	\$0	0.00%
Dissemination	\$0	0.00%
Other	\$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	\$13,095,393	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$15,714,472	

## Option 5B Grants to End Users: \$9.3m

As per 5A with reduced annual budget and changed sequencing – changes in purple

<b>Implementation Caveats</b>	As per 5A
<b>Staff Profile</b>	As per 5A
<b>Sequencing</b>	Year 1: 2 Regions Year 2: 1 Region Year 3: 1 Region Year 4: 1 Region
<b>Operational needs</b>	Annual grant budget of approximately \$1.5m (\$300,000 per region) 8 grants per global region per year (40 total annually) that can range from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	\$332,576	4.24%
Contracts	\$7,500,000	95.57%
Tools	\$14,786	0.19%
Training event attendance	\$0	0.00%
Citizen engagement	\$0	0.00%
Travel	\$0	0.00%
Dissemination	\$0	0.00%
Other	\$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	\$7,847,362	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	\$9,416,835	

## PART TWO – IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

### How to prioritize implementation of demand-side options

As recommended in the Stage 4a report (pp8-9), initial implementation should focus on Option 1 – *Regional Demand-Side Secretariats*, Option 2 – *Support to Evidence Intermediaries*, and Option 3 – *Co-Design Labs*, which were collectively assessed as offering the greatest potential impact. *Support for Intermediaries* and *Co-design Labs* also received favourable feedback during Stage 4a consultations, with stakeholders highlighting their practical value in building capacity and enabling inclusive, applied engagement.

#### Box 1. Factors to consider in determining how to allocate resources – from Stage 4a

The Stage 4a report (p10), set out several key factors that investors must weigh when determining the most effective allocation of resources:

1. Regional needs and sectoral gaps
2. Equity as a core consideration
3. Leveraging existing actors vs. creating new institutions
4. Scaling implementation based on readiness
5. The role of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

However, *Regional Secretariats* are essential to address persistent fragmentation and weak coordination across regions, sectors, and interest holders. While *Support for Intermediaries* and *Co-design Labs* could, in theory, proceed in isolation, their long-term effectiveness – and their alignment with outputs from other working groups such as capability development and AI integration – would be diminished without a coordinating mechanism. This is also true of Option 5 – *Grants*, which, though agile and accessible, would benefit from governance and planning support to ensure strategic targeting and learning. Option 4 – *Question/Thematic Repositories* and other components can be introduced in subsequent phases, once core infrastructure and relationships are in place, and timed to align with sector-specific improvements being advanced through parallel working group efforts.

### Embedding Equity in Design and Implementation

Equity will be a central principle embedded across all demand-side proposals, shaping both design and implementation. This includes ensuring that geographic and sectoral focus favours areas with limited existing infrastructure or capability, to address long-standing disparities in access to and use of evidence. Representation across staff teams and governance structures will be intentionally diverse, supporting inclusive decision-making and legitimacy across contexts. The equity component should be monitored over the time.

Investment strategies will balance strengthening existing capabilities with building new ones – recognising the need to support emerging actors alongside established organisations. Additionally, overall investment allocation will favour regions and sectors with the greatest need, ensuring that support flows to under-represented groups and contexts. Together, these actions will ensure equity is a cross-cutting commitment embedded in how all proposals are prioritised, governed, and delivered.

## Alignment with the SHOW ME Principles

The five options proposed in this report align with the SHOW ME the evidence principles as set out below:

### 1. Support systems locally that use many forms of research evidence to help address local priorities

The establishment of *Regional Demand-Side* secretariats and *Co-design Labs* directly supports place-based systems that bring together diverse forms of knowledge – including research evidence, lived experience, and contextual expertise – to co-produce solutions aligned with local priorities.

### 2. Harmonized efforts globally that make it easier to learn from others around the world

Through *regional coordination* structures and *intermediary networks*, WG1's approach enables knowledge sharing across sectors and geographies. These structures can serve as key nodes in a globally harmonised system, supporting peer exchange, capacity development, and alignment with broader standards developed through other working groups.

### 3. Open-science approaches that make it the norm to build on what others have done

These options encourage transparency and shared learning, particularly through *Co-design processes* and *Intermediary Support*. These mechanisms facilitate collaborative problem-solving and open access to evidence use strategies, enhancing the cumulative value of synthesis efforts.

### 4. Waste-reduction efforts that make the most of investments in evidence support and in research

By investing in coordination (Option 1), strengthening intermediary capacity (Option 2), and improving engagement pathways (Option 3), these solutions support more targeted and timely use of existing evidence, reducing duplication and increasing the relevance of synthesis outputs.

### 5. Measured communications that clarify what we know from existing evidence and with what caveats

Evidence intermediaries supported under these options will play a key role in translating complex syntheses into accessible, context-specific guidance, helping decision-makers and stakeholders understand both the strength of evidence and its limitations.

### 6. Equity and efficiency in all aspects of this work

Equity is embedded as a cross-cutting principle in WG1's proposals, with mechanisms such as participation grants, diverse governance, and targeted investment in under-served regions and sectors. These efforts aim to ensure that evidence systems are both inclusive and efficient in responding to a wide range of needs and contexts – see p13.

## Alignment of Initiatives Across Working Groups

The five options proposed in this report – including the establishment of *Regional Demand-side Secretariats*, *Support for Evidence Intermediaries*, and the creation of *Co-design Labs* – demonstrate clear points of alignment with the priorities identified by Working Groups 2 to 5. Coordinated planning and implementation across these initiatives will be critical to ensuring an efficient, coherent, and sustainable evidence synthesis ecosystem.

WG2's emphasis on standardised data infrastructure and interoperable platforms, and WG3's development of AI-enabled tools and synthesis automation, both require end-user engagement and context-specific application. The intermediary networks fostered through the demand-side options and engagement spaces like *Co-design Labs*, offer mechanisms to support the practical testing, localisation, and uptake of these technical solutions.

Similarly, WG4's work on harmonising quality standards and supporting methodological innovation, and WG5's focus on capacity-building, knowledge mobilisation, and regional collaboration, align with the governance and facilitation functions envisioned within *Regional Secretariats*. These structures could serve as regional convenors or implementation partners for WG4 and WG5 initiatives, supporting coordinated delivery and reinforcing local capability.

To support effective alignment, a cross-working group implementation framework may be required. This could include a central coordinating mechanism (as suggested in the Global Planning Group's proposed "connector" model) to oversee integration and manage dependencies. Sequencing of initiatives should also be considered to ensure that foundational infrastructure and relationships are in place prior to scaling more complex or resource-intensive activities.

Overall, coordination across working groups will enhance complementarity, reduce duplication, and support the delivery of a more integrated and responsive global evidence synthesis system.

## The next steps from here

The final report (Roadmap) will compile findings for discussion at the Cape Town meeting in June 2025, where stakeholders will finalise investment strategies for improving the evidence synthesis ecosystem.

This is a pivotal moment for shaping a more inclusive, balanced global evidence ecosystem. The decisions made in Cape Town will determine whether all sectors and regions can benefit – or whether existing disparities will persist."

## Appendix 1 – Glossary of terms

This brief list includes key terms used in the report, defined in simple and plain language to clarify their intended meaning. More comprehensive definitions can be found in earlier reports. Additionally, some links are included for broader discussions of these terms. See, in particular, the Demand-side engagement [Stage 2 Report](#).

### **Evidence Intermediaries**

Entities or individuals that operate between decision-makers and evidence producers, facilitating the use of evidence in decision-making processes. ([McMaster Health Forum](#))

### **End-Users**

Individuals or groups who apply research findings in real-world contexts, such as policymakers, practitioners, organisational leaders, or the public.

### **Evidence Synthesis**

The process of systematically combining information from multiple studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of a particular topic. ([Cochrane](#))

### **Co-Design Labs**

Collaborative spaces where researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders jointly develop and apply evidence to address specific policy or practice challenges.

### **Question Repositories**

Structured platforms that collect and organize policy-relevant questions to guide evidence synthesis efforts.

### **Demand-Side Actors**

Synonym to end-users (above) often used to contrast with supply-side actors (below): Interest holders who seek and use evidence to inform their decisions, including policymakers, practitioners, and the public.

### **Supply-Side Actors**

Researchers and institutions that produce evidence intended for use by decision-makers and practitioners including primary research, systemic reviews and evidence synthesizers.

### **Evidence Ecosystem**

The interconnected network of individuals, organizations, and processes involved in the production, translation, and use of evidence in decision-making.

### **Evidence Support Units**

Organizations or teams that provide assistance in accessing, interpreting, and applying evidence to inform decisions.



## Appendix 2 – (from Stage 4a) Roadmap Integration Table: Comparative overview of options

Problem	Solution Name	Type of Solution	Why Is It Innovative?	Expected Outcome	Success/Destination (example)	Synergies
Fragmented and inconsistent coordination of evidence use across geographies; lack of localised governance for demand-side engagement.	<b>Regional Demand-Side Secretariats</b>	(a) Evidence synthesis infrastructure	Avoids overly centralised and bureaucratic models in favour of a decentralised, context-sensitive coordination structure; enables regional tailoring and cross-learning.	Improved coordination, equity, and local responsiveness in how evidence is used for policy. Better alignment between global priorities and regional decision-making. Supports policy actors and intermediaries in underserved regions.	<i>By end 2028, at least 4 regional secretariats operational, each with a multi-stakeholder board, shared learning platforms, and demonstrated uptake of synthesis in national policies.</i>	Potential alignment with governance models supportive of various functions proposed by other working groups. Demand-side work could exist within or alongside other secretariat functions
Weak capacity of intermediaries to translate, contextualise, and communicate synthesis to end-users. Inconsistent quality and access across regions/sectors.	<b>Provide Implementation Support to Intermediaries</b>	(b) Evidence synthesis process	Shifts focus from producers or end-users to "in-between" actors, offering structured support and professionalisation. Highly scalable and cost-effective.	Stronger intermediary ecosystem across sectors, improved translation of synthesis into actionable insights, faster uptake by decision-makers. Benefits policymakers, civil servants, NGOs, and researchers.	<i>By end 2026, 30+ intermediaries trained or supported; quality standards adopted across 3 major sectors; increased demand-side engagement metrics reported in funded regions.</i>	WG2 Regional training modules and networks – some complementary functions; WG2 Sout-South mentorship – could exist as tool for support; WG4 tools for translating to local context;
End-users often excluded from question-framing and evidence development; outputs not tailored to policy realities or public needs.	<b>Create Co-Design Labs</b>	(b) Evidence synthesis process / (c) Projects	Embeds co-production at the centre of synthesis. Cross-sectoral collaboration tools that enhances relevance and legitimacy. Can be adapted across issues and geographies.	Increased ownership and uptake of synthesis outputs, especially in complex or emergent policy areas. Benefits researchers, policymakers, and community stakeholders.	<i>By end 2026, 15 active labs events with measurable outputs (e.g., syntheses commissioned, policy tools developed); 80% of participants report improved relevance and collaboration.</i>	WG3 grants to ensure tools are shared also focuses on user-centred, and equitable implementation.
Disconnect between policy questions and synthesis outputs; duplication of efforts; lack of visibility on shared priorities across systems.	<b>Develop Thematic Repositories (incl. question banks)</b>	(a) Evidence synthesis infrastructure	Provides a transparent, shared interface between demand and supply sides. Could be linked with AI and real-time evidence platforms. Enhances coordination and reuse of synthesis.	More timely and targeted synthesis outputs; decreased duplication; increased engagement in priority-setting by policymakers and communities.	<i>By end 2026, 1 operational repository globally with in 1-2 regional or sectors being established; minimum 100 curated questions, 15 co-produced syntheses launched; regular user feedback integrated.</i>	WG5 Living Horizon and Environmental Scanning may overlap with some operational aspects of the repositories; Other repositories different purpose (WG2 living evidence repository; WG4 evidence repository)
Limited resources for end-users to apply evidence synthesis in real-time decision-making; lack of experimentation or innovation at point of use.	<b>Provide Grants to End-Users</b>	(c) Projects	Shifts control and experimentation to demand-side actors. Allows bottom-up innovation and embedded practice of synthesis use.	Greater evidence use in real-world contexts. Encourages diversity of approaches and empowers actors in low-capacity or underserved areas. Especially useful for local governments, CSOs, or front-line implementers.	<i>By end 2027, 50+ micro-grants awarded; evidence-informed policies adopted in 15+ institutions; learning from grant-funded pilots synthesised and shared.</i>	WG5 Global Synthesis Innovation Fund – may link with WG1 activity grants to end users

## Appendix 3 – WG1 Options compared to Stage 1 Gaps, and Stage 2 Capabilities

WG1 Option	Stage 1 Gaps Addressed	How the option responds to the gaps	Stage 2 Capabilities strengthened	How the option builds these capabilities
<b>1. Regional Demand-Side Secretariats</b>	<p><b>Systems:</b> Fragmentation, lack of sustainability</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> Underinvestment in capacity, neglect of grassroots actors</p> <p><b>Processes:</b> Lack of structured advisory systems</p>	<p>Creates decentralised but formal coordination mechanisms that provide stable, scalable infrastructure and link local priorities to global learning.</p> <p>Helps consolidate and align fragmented actors and efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mapping stakeholders</li> <li>- Mapping systems</li> <li>- Cross-sector collaboration</li> <li>- Facilitating feedback and learning</li> <li>- Promoting evidence-informed decision-making</li> </ul>	<p>Provides a permanent coordination body that engages across sectors and levels, enabling systematic mapping, convening, and feedback loops.</p> <p>Supports the strategic use of evidence in policymaking.</p>
<b>2. Support to Evidence Intermediaries</b>	<p><b>Resources:</b> Limited support for inclusive engagement, underinvestment in capacity</p> <p><b>Processes:</b> Limited innovation in uptake</p> <p><b>Technology:</b> Accessibility issues, digital exclusion</p> <p><b>Platforms:</b> Limited engagement mechanisms</p>	<p>Builds capacity of intermediaries who broker evidence for end-users, increasing reach, accessibility, and contextual relevance.</p> <p>Supports tailored communication and translation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accessing and interpreting evidence</li> <li>- Sharing and promoting evidence use</li> <li>- Engaging stakeholders- Effective collaboration</li> <li>- Promoting decision-making</li> </ul>	<p>Strengthens intermediaries' ability to support end-users with synthesised evidence, contextual translation, and knowledge mobilisation.</p> <p>Helps connect producers and users.</p>
<b>3. Co-Design Labs</b>	<p><b>Processes:</b> Lack of participatory mechanisms, weak infrastructure</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> Neglect of marginalised voices</p> <p><b>Data:</b> Lack of standard approaches for question formulation</p> <p><b>Systems:</b> Complexity of transdisciplinary collaboration</p>	<p>Provides inclusive, participatory platforms where diverse actors jointly define problems, co-create solutions, and generate demand-led questions.</p> <p>Encourages innovation and local ownership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying and prioritising problems</li> <li>- Engaging stakeholders</li> <li>- Effective collaboration</li> <li>- Facilitating feedback and learning</li> </ul>	<p>Offers structured cycles of engagement with multiple touchpoints for collaboration, learning, and mutual accountability.</p> <p>Builds capability in setting agendas and co-producing knowledge.</p>

WG1 Option	Stage 1 Gaps Addressed	How the option responds to the gaps	Stage 2 Capabilities STRENGTHENED	How the option builds these capabilities
<b>4. Question / thematic Repositories</b>	<p><b>Data:</b> No standard question prioritisation processes</p> <p><b>Platforms:</b> Poor visibility, limited user feedback</p> <p><b>Technology:</b> Under-explored AI and analytics potential</p>	<p>Creates structured platforms for transparent question generation and prioritisation.</p> <p>Can be linked to digital and AI tools for continuous updating and relevance tracking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying and prioritising problems</li> <li>- Promoting decision-making</li> <li>- Sharing evidence use- Facilitating learning</li> </ul>	<p>Provides a shared infrastructure for capturing, refining, and revisiting policy-relevant questions.</p> <p>Enhances alignment between evidence supply and demand.</p>
<b>5. Grants to End-Users</b>	<p><b>Resources:</b> Inefficient allocation, limited support for grassroots actors</p> <p><b>Systems:</b> Absence of international enabling infrastructure</p> <p><b>Processes:</b> Lack of early-stage investment in problem definition</p>	<p>Enables bottom-up experimentation and inclusion through flexible, equity-focused funding. Supports actors who would otherwise lack the means to engage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engaging stakeholders- Accessing and interpreting evidence</li> <li>- Promoting decision-making</li> <li>- Facilitating collaboration</li> </ul>	<p>Supports local actors in testing and embedding evidence use.</p> <p>Promotes inclusive engagement and strengthens end-user leadership in evidence-informed initiatives.</p>